

Non-Secure Item*Non-Secure Item***Non-Secure Item***Non-Secure Item**
ISTEP+ Applied Skills Sample for Classroom Use
ELA – Grade 8
(Constructed-Response, Extended-Response)

Excerpt from *The Call of the Wild*
by Jack London

Introduction: Buck, an impressively powerful half sheepdog, half Saint Bernard, was once a pet. He was taken from a sheltered life and turned into a sled dog, forced to work in harsh conditions. John Thornton rescues Buck, who is hurt and exhausted. As Buck is nursed back to health by John and his two dogs, he feels love and loyalty toward John.

1 When John Thornton froze his feet in the previous December his partners had made him comfortable and left him to get well, going on themselves up the river to get out a raft of saw-logs for Dawson. He was still limping slightly at the time he rescued Buck, but with the continued warm weather even the slight limp left him. And here, lying by the river bank through the long spring days, watching the running water, listening lazily to the songs of birds and the hum of nature, Buck slowly won back his strength.

2 A rest comes very good after one has travelled three thousand miles, and it must be confessed that Buck waxed lazy as his wounds healed, his muscles swelled out, and the flesh came back to cover his bones. For that matter, they were all loafing,—Buck, John Thornton, and his two other dogs,—waiting for the raft to come that was to carry them down to Dawson. Skeet was a little Irish setter who early made friends with Buck, who, in a dying condition, was unable to resent her first advances. She had the doctor trait which some dogs possess; and as a mother cat washes her kittens, so she washed and cleansed Buck's wounds. Regularly, each morning after he had finished his breakfast, she performed her self-appointed task, till he came to look for her ministrations as much as he did for Thornton's. John's other dog, equally friendly, though less demonstrative, was a huge black dog, half bloodhound and half deerhound, with eyes that laughed and a boundless good nature.

3 To Buck's surprise these dogs manifested no jealousy toward him. They seemed to share the kindliness and largeness of John Thornton. As Buck grew stronger they enticed him into all sorts of ridiculous games, in which Thornton himself could not forbear to join; and in this fashion Buck romped through his convalescence and into a new existence. Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time. This he had never experienced at Judge Miller's down in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. With the Judge's sons, hunting and tramping, it had been a working partnership; with the Judge's grandsons, a sort of pompous guardianship; and with the Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness, it had taken John Thornton to arouse.

4 This man had saved his life, which was something; but, further, he was the ideal master. Other men saw to the welfare of their dogs from a sense of duty and business expediency; he saw to the welfare of his as if they were his own children, because he could not help it. And he saw further. He never forgot a kindly greeting or a cheering word, and to sit down for a long talk with them ("gas" he called it) was as much his delight as theirs. He had a way of taking Buck's head roughly between his hands, and resting his own head upon Buck's, of shaking him back and

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forth, the while calling him ill names that to Buck were love names. Buck knew no greater joy than that rough embrace and the sound of murmured oaths, and at each jerk back and forth it seemed that his heart would be shaken out of his body so great was its ecstasy. And when, released, he sprang to his feet, his mouth laughing, his eyes eloquent, his throat vibrant with unuttered sound, and in that fashion remained without movement, John Thornton would reverently exclaim, "God! you can all but speak!"

5 Buck had a trick of love expression that was akin to hurt. He would often seize Thornton's hand in his mouth and close so fiercely that the flesh bore the impress of his teeth for some time afterward. And as Buck understood the oaths to be love words, so the man understood this feigned bite for a caress.

6 For the most part, however, Buck's love was expressed in adoration. While he went wild with happiness when Thornton touched him or spoke to him, he did not seek these tokens. Unlike Skeet, who was wont to shove her nose under Thornton's hand and nudge and nudge till petted, or John's other dog, who would stalk up and rest his great head on Thornton's knee, Buck was content to adore at a distance. He would lie by the hour, eager, alert, at Thornton's feet, looking up into his face, dwelling upon it, studying it, following with keenest interest each fleeting expression, every movement or change of feature.

7 For a long time after his rescue, Buck did not like Thornton to get out of his sight. From the moment he left the tent to when he entered it again, Buck would follow at his heels. His transient masters since he had come into the Northland had bred in him a fear that no master could be permanent. He was afraid that Thornton would pass out of his life as Perrault and Francois and the Scotch half-breed had passed out. Even in the night, in his dreams, he was haunted by this fear. At such times he would shake off sleep and creep through the chill to the flap of the tent, where he would stand and listen to the sound of his master's breathing.

8 But in spite of this great love he bore John Thornton, which seemed to bespeak the soft civilizing influence, the strain of the primitive, which the Northland had aroused in him, remained alive and active. Faithfulness and devotion, things born of fire and roof, were his; yet he retained his wildness and wiliness. He was a thing of the wild, come in from the wild to sit by John Thornton's fire, rather than a dog of the soft Southland stamped with the marks of generations of civilization.

Source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/215/pg215.txt>

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Passage: The Call of the Wild			
Content Standard: 8.RL.2.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a work of literature propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.			
Item Type: Constructed-Response	Pts: 2	DOK: 3	Grade: 8

How does Buck change after he is rescued by John Thornton? Support your response with details from the excerpt.

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Passage: The Call of the Wild			
Content Standard: 8.W.3.2: Write informative compositions on a variety of topics that – <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., <i>headings</i>), graphics (e.g., <i>charts, tables</i>), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.● Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples from various sources and texts.● Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.● Choose language and content-specific vocabulary that express ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.● Establish and maintain a style appropriate to the purpose and audience.● Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.			
Item Type: Extended-Response	Pts: 8	DOK: 4	Grade: 8

You have just read an excerpt from *The Call of the Wild*. How is Buck a reflection of John Thornton? Using examples from the excerpt, write an essay that discusses how Buck’s behavior is a result of his interactions with John Thornton and his dogs. Support your response with details from the excerpt.